



**Here, Students Succeed**

Reopening Plan

July 24, 2020

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# Reopening Meriden Public Schools Staff Committee

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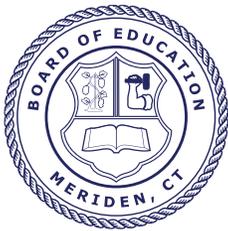
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July 24, 2020

Dear MPS Community,

I am proud to be your superintendent and I am impressed with how we all have worked together to ensure that our students remain at the heart of our efforts. The Connecticut State Department of Education recently issued fall 2020 Reopening Guidance that has all students and staff back in school for in-person learning. This decision for full-time instruction will occur as long as public health data supports this model. The MPS plan addresses the state's requirements and lays out our plan for a successful fall 2020 reopening.

We value the feedback from our staff and parents. One parent shared the following message:

I want to send my kids back to school. They need to learn. They need structure. If that means wearing a mask, so be it. We all try to be the best we can at wearing them. It is going to be a struggle for everyone. As an essential worker, we have had to adjust to masks....I have talked with my children about how school will be different next year. They understand and still want to go.

Teachers shared:

Really miss working with my students and co-worker. I just want us ALL to be safe and comfortable coming back to work. I feel confident that the school district will do everything they can to ensure the safety of students and staff.

I hope the district is able to come up with a solution to help these kids learn but also keep everyone safe. Thank you for your diligence with this seemingly impossible big endeavor.

We know this will be a time of adjustment for all, but I am confident together we will successfully meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Thank you for all of your support!

Best,

Mark

Mark D. Benigni, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Meriden Public Schools

# Priorities

## Fall Reopening Model

- Meriden Public Schools (MPS) has a plan in place to have **all students** returning to school **every day** for **in-person** learning in the fall.
- The district will monitor the weather conditions and if there are high temperatures, early dismissal or distance learning will be considered.
- If the state requires a **hybrid model**, MPS will offer onsite classes for a cohort of students Monday and Tuesday, and a second cohort of students Thursday and Friday. All students will participate in distance learning on Wednesday. This model will have both cohorts participating in onsite learning 2 days a week and distance learning 3 days a week. This model will allow us to reduce school population in half and allow more space for social distancing. Elementary school will cohort onsite by dividing the classes in half. Middle schools will divide teams in half and high schools will divide total population in half. High schools will have a modified schedule (Monday/Thursday Periods 1-4, Tuesday/Friday Periods 5-8, Wednesday Periods 1-8).

Model	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Hybrid Model (onsite by cohort)	Cohort A (onsite)	Cohort A (onsite)	All Students Distance Learning	Cohort A (Distance)	Cohort A (Distance)
	Cohort B (Distance)	Cohort B (Distance)		Cohort B (onsite)	Cohort B (onsite)
Distance Learning Model (Optional)	Distance Learning				

- Meriden is prepared to transition to a **distance learning model**. Meriden will use the foundational elements of their distance learning plan launched in spring 2020. In addition, staff will provide regular Google Meets to ensure consistency of instruction and student understanding of new learning.
  - Students will be placed in a group with other virtual learners
  - Students will be instructed by certified teachers who have been assigned as virtual learning instructors
  - Students will begin their virtual learning at the same start time as the traditional school day
  - Students will receive daily direct instruction, as well as assignments that will be completed independently

- Sample Distance Learning Student Schedules
  - Elementary Students
    - 8:55 AM - 12:00 noon Synchronous instruction facilitated by the teacher
    - 12:00 noon -12:40 PM Lunch break for all
    - 12:40 PM - 3:20 PM Asynchronous learning block
      - Students will complete assigned digital content
      - A Special will be provided once a week
      - Teachers will schedule time to meet with small groups of students throughout the week
  - Middle School Students
    - 7:55 AM - 2:15 PM Synchronous instruction will be provided for the four (4) core classes; English, Math, Science, Social Studies, as well as one elective.
    - The additional time each day will be asynchronous learning, supported by adaptive digital content.
  - High School Students
    - 7:30 AM - 2:00 PM Synchronous instruction will be provided for six (6) courses; however, selection of classes will be limited based on teacher availability and certification.
    - Online courses where MPS certified staff are available, as well as Middlesex Community College online offerings, will be explored.
  
- Meriden has multiple data points, including iReady Benchmark assessments, SBA Interim assessments and data from digital content, that were used throughout the distance learning period. In addition, students will be taking the iReady assessment in the fall. We will use these data points to identify students who need additional support.

## Temporarily Choosing Not to Participate

- Parents may temporarily choose to have their children participate in a distance learning program.
- Due to cohorting, class sizes, staffing and continuity of learning, students will remain in distance learning until the end of the marking period for consistency of instruction
- A family may choose to return to onsite learning by contacting the Office of Teaching and Innovation.
- Secondary school courses will be offered to the extent that classes are available.

## School Liaison, Communication Plans, and Data Collection

- COVID-19 Healthy and Safety Compliance Liaison
  - Michael Grove, Assistant Superintendent for Technology and Operations
  - Phone: 203-630-4173
- MPS will communicate with families through ParentSquare and other media
  - Families select preferred language
  - Allows for two-way communication
  - Weekly, the schools will share health and learning updates
- MPS Staff communication will be provided through Meriden Administrators' Association, Building Administrators, and District Supervisors
- Updates will continue to be posted on the Meriden Public Schools' district website
- Changes in policies, cancellation of classes or other changes and restrictions will be shared with the community on the district website
- Families and staff were surveyed to share their feedback about school reopening (See Appendix A, See Appendix B)
- Families and staff were also surveyed about returning onsite in the fall and the need for student transportation (See Appendix C, See Appendix D)

## Operations Plan

### Facilities

- All desks/tables face forward
- Remove all extra furniture to allow for maximum spacing
- Remove all area rugs
- Teacher desks will have plexiglass on desk
- Class sizes not to exceed 25 students in core areas
- Class cohort will have access to sinks with soap and paper towels, and/or hand sanitizer
- Use outdoor instruction areas when feasible
- Stop the Spread signage will be posted in every classroom in English and Spanish
- Wash Your Hands signage will be visible in all restrooms and near sinks in English and Spanish

- All air hand dryers have been disabled and touchless paper towel dispensers have been added
- Daily morning announcement reminders will include Stop the Spread messaging
- HVAC contractor (CTC) was contracted to confirm systems are operating per state guidance
- HVAC systems will be kept running all hours that the school building is occupied, including two hours before and after
- All classroom and office doors will be maintained open and in the locked position to minimize contact with touchpoints
- Environmental engineering firm is scheduled to provide professional learning for custodial staff on COVID-19 cleaning procedures
- All staff will complete COVID-19 online training course
- Refresher information will be shared at monthly faculty meetings
- Updated CDC guidance and training will be available to students and families on the Meriden Public Schools' website
- To meet new cleaning guidance from DPH, 4 additional hours of custodial coverage at all schools and programs are being added
- Schools will assign bathrooms available for student use
- Working with the Meriden Health Department, MPS restructuring nursing suites to meet COVID-19 requirements
- MPS Building Safety Measures are posted on the district website (See Appendix F)

## Daily Operations

- Elementary students will remain in cohorts
- Middle school team cohorts
- Where feasible, establish cohorts in grades 9-12
- Larger spaces will be utilized for instruction - auditorium, gymnasium, outdoor sports complex
- Lunch
  - Reduce capacity of cafeteria by 50%
  - Staggered seating in cafeteria to maximize distancing
  - Cleaning and sanitizing tables and seating between lunch waves
  - Reduction of meal choices to reduce time spent waiting in lines
  - Self-selected food will be served in closed containers.
  - Students will wear mask coverings until they are seated and eating at a table
- Identify school entrance and exits in building for grade level in order to reduce hallway traffic
- All students will have devices with them on the first day of school
- All teachers will set up a Google or Moodle Classroom the first week of school and maintain the online presence so that all are prepared if we need to transition to different model
- All students will access digital content beginning the first week of school, which will allow for a smooth transition to distance learning if needed

- Regular communication with local health officials will allow for any necessary rapid changes
- Installing markings on floors illustrate foot-traffic expectations
- School staff will keep traffic moving in stairways and hallways
- Students will wash or sanitize their hands throughout the school day
- Time outside will be maximized weather permitting
- Morning and afterschool care in school buildings will be available following state guidelines
- The district volunteer program has been suspended until further notice
- Outside professional development providers will offer services online
- Any parent entering a school will follow Meriden Health Department guidelines
  - All parents must have a scheduled appointment
  - Health Department screening questions will be used before any parent appointments
- Deep cleanings will be scheduled when students are not in session

## Child Nutrition

- All Meriden Public School students receive no-cost breakfast and lunch
  - The district is investigating a possible federal waiver that would allow Grab and Go lunch and breakfast options for secondary students at dismissal
- MPS complies with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's regulations and policies for school meals and milk, including the meal pattern requirements
- MPS participates in the NSLP and provides accurate counting and claiming methods

## Transportation

### Low Transmission Risk

- Minimizing the number of students on elementary buses by adding three buses and eight additional runs
- Masks will be provided for any student who does not have a mask when entering the bus. Mask must completely cover the nose and the mouth while on the bus
- Buses will be loaded from the back to the front and then unloaded in an orderly fashion upon arrival at the school
- Six district-wide bus monitors will be available to address needs
- Windows on the buses will be kept open

### Moderate Transmission Risk

- Reduced capacity to 60% of riders
- Students will be assigned seats and family members will sit together

- Masks will be provided for any student who does not have a mask when entering the bus. Mask must completely cover the nose and the mouth while on the bus
- Buses will be loaded from the back to the front and then unloaded in an orderly fashion upon arrival at the school
- Windows on the buses will be kept open

## Health Practices and Protocols

- All Meriden Health Department guidelines will be followed
- All staff and students will be educated on how to prevent the spread of the disease through videos, signage and an online course
- Supplies, including soap, hand sanitizer, touchless paper towel dispensers, tissues, disinfectant wipes, 110 touchless hand sanitizer dispensers with stands, will be distributed throughout the schools, 3 cloth masks for each staff member, 80,000 disposal masks available to students who do not come to school with a mask

## Reporting Illnesses and Addressing Vulnerable Populations

- Students and staff will inform the school if they are sick with COVID-19 related symptoms or if they have had contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19. The school will notify the school nurse. The COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison will maintain regular contact with the Meriden Health Department.
- All staff and families will be notified about when to stay home and required self-assessments prior to coming to school. Those who have a temperature greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit must stay home.

## Social Distancing

- Floor markings will be in all buildings to illustrate social distancing between individuals
- Building signage will be in all buildings to illustrate social distancing between individuals

## Use of Face Covering, Masks, and Face Shields

- All students and staff will use a mask that covers their mouth and nose in all Meriden Public School buildings
- Exceptions follow CDC guidance
- MPS has masks for any student or staff who does not have one

# Health Monitoring Plan

## Planning and Distribution of Information

- Written protocols for monitoring of symptoms of COVID-19 will be shared with parents through ParentSquare
  - Daily Health Check
    - Each day parents/guardians are responsible for monitoring student temperature and symptoms prior to coming to school.
    - COVID-19 CDC-defined symptoms include cough, shortness of breath, or any of the following symptoms: fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell
    - If a child has these symptoms, the child should stay home and notify the school nurse.

## Containment Plan

- Students or staff entering the health office not feeling well with COVID-19 like symptoms:
  - The public health nurse will isolate the student or staff member in the designated isolation area within the health office
  - The public health nurse will perform a temperature check and symptom assessment
  - The student or staff member must be excluded from school and can only return with a documented negative COVID-19 test result or a note from their healthcare provider
  - All students waiting for transportation home must wait in the isolation area until their parent/guardian arrives
  - The health director and/or associate health director will be notified immediately of a suspected COVID-19 illness
  - If a child or staff member that has been present in school has a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis, notify the health director and/or associate health director immediately
  - The health director and/or associate health director will notify the Superintendent of Schools of the positive diagnosis and will provide guidance in accordance with the latest CDC guidelines. Parents will be notified within 24 hours of a positive case

## Cancellation of Classes, Remote Learning, and Reopening Plans

- Distance learning will be implemented if required by the state
- Students, staff and families will be notified through ParentSquare
- Google and Moodle Classrooms, as well as digital content access, will be available beginning the first day of school
- Students will have continuity of learning in a virtual environment

## Future Planning for Remote Blended Learning

- MPS, a 1:1 school district, will transition to a remote blended learning model immediately upon cancellation of in-school classes
- Breakfast and lunch will remain available for students throughout the city
- MPS Distance Learning Survey (Appendix E) results show:
  - 84% of parents and 87% of students believe distance learning was meaningful
  - 89% of parents were satisfied with distance learning
  - Over 75% of students, over 88% of parents, and over 90% of teachers were satisfied with distance learning and felt activities were meaningful

## Academics

### Special Education

- Continue to follow state guidance
- Continue to implement IEPs to the greatest extent possible under the current health and safety guidelines
- Communicate with families to ease the transition back to school
- Assist families of students with a high level of need to develop transition plans to assist students in their return to the building (i.e. social stories, visual cues, knowledge of expectations)
- Individually address students' needs regarding the use of PPE
- Prepare for students who may require remote instruction

### English Learners (ELs)

- Continue to provide Bilingual Education, Sheltered Instruction and ESOL support upon return to school
- Dually identified students will continue to have language needs represented in their IEPs provided with the appropriate support
- Continue the use of ParentSquare to communicate with parents, who have the ability to select the language in which they receive their messages

## Physical Education

- CDC, state, and local guidelines related to social distancing and disinfecting areas and equipment will be followed
- Students will enter gymnasium and stand next to a floor marking to ensure social distancing
- Students will enter and exit through different doors to minimize student contact
- Outside space will be utilized weather permitting
- Activities to support social distancing include: all fitness components of the fitness test (pacer, sit and reach, push up, curl-up), yoga, Pilates, cardio kickboxing, step aerobics, orienteering, geocaching, tai chi, meditation, soccer, volleyball, tennis, backyard games, and fitness walking
- Equipment will be disinfected after each class

## The Arts

- Marching band field shows will be developed with a minimum of 12 feet between players at all times
- Instrumental classes will continue in grades 4-12. Elementary students will be cohorted by class and middle school students will be cohorted by team
- All music equipment, including drum sticks, mallets, instruments, and supplies, will be provided to individual students with no sharing allowed
- All course content will still be assigned in Google Classroom
- Software, including Quavers, MusiQuest and digital textbooks, will be encouraged
- Art supplies will be provided to individual students in elementary grades. Shared items will be sanitized after each use
- 6-12 art classes will have cleaning protocols for all supplies at the close of each period
- Sprays and buckets to dip equipment, in order to thoroughly sanitize, will be in all classrooms
- Discharge receptacles will be added to any spaces with brass players to ensure a sanitary process for discharging valves
- Theater seating areas will be converted to large rehearsal spaces - music stands in odd rows, students in even rows with 12 feet of separation.
- Masks will be worn during all arts activities (including singing) with the exception of band instrument performance
- Theater programs remain active with social distancing and masks

## Family and Student Engagement

### Family Support and Communication

- Continue to engage with families in accordance with state and federal guidelines
- Timely information will be provided to families through the use of ParentSquare, the tool provides for two-way communication
- Meriden's Reopening Plan, including the contact information for the school liaison, will be posted on the district website

## Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mental Health

- Schools will be open two weeks before the first day of school for staff to transition to the school environment
- Students may make an appointment to visit schools two weeks prior to the first day of school
- School psychologists, social workers, and school counselors will work with their school teams to identify strategies to engage disengaged students
- All staff will participate in DCF Mandated Reporter Training during the August staff meeting

## After-school Programing

- Meriden will continue to consult with CSDE to determine guidance for Extended School Hours program and the State After School Grant for Lincoln and Washington Middle Schools
- School space will be identified to ensure social distancing guidelines are met and masks will be required

## Career and Technical Education

- High school students will be educated in all safety processes in order to ensure that their equipment is clean and disinfected before and after each use

## Staff and Personnel

### Certification and Personnel Planning

- Assistant Superintendent for Personnel and Talent Development will participate in regularly scheduled meetings with legal counsel for updates on legal and regulatory requirements associated with EEOC, ADA, and COVID-19 pandemic
- Updates will regularly be shared with staff at administrator meetings and staff meetings
- Staffing needs are being evaluated
- The flexible staffing guidelines provided by CSDE will allow for teacher coverage and continued student instruction
- Requests to hire additional staff will be made as dictated by need and budget

### Professional Development

- All staff members will complete an online course *COVID-19: Plan, Prepare, and Respond* (Due to the ever-changing conditions and recommendations in the fight against COVID-19, the following slides rely heavily on guidance, language and documentation provided by the CDC. The topics covered in this tutorial include: What is COVID-19 and How is it Spread?, Recommended Resources for School Administrators, Guidance for School Staff, Teachers, Aides and Nutritional Service Personnel)

# Appendices

[Appendix A Family Reopening Feedback](#)

[Appendix B Staff Reopening Feedback](#)

[Appendix C Staff Reopening Survey](#)

[Appendix D Family Reopening Survey](#)

[Appendix E Distance Learning Survey](#)

[Appendix F Meriden Public Schools Building Safety Measures](#)

# Appendix A

## Family Reopening Feedback

### Meriden Public Schools Reopening - Fall 2020

We value your opinion, please share your thoughts with us.

\* Required

Name \*

Your answer

Child/Children's Name(s) \*

Your answer

School(s) \*

- John Barry
- Benjamin Franklin
- Nathan Hale
- Hanover
- Thomas Hooker
- Casimir Pulaski
- Israel Putnam
- Roger Sherman
- Lincoln Middle School
- Washington Middle School
- Maloney High School
- Platt High School
- Success Academy
- Venture Academy
- CCC

Grade(s) \*

Kindergarten

Grade 1

Grade 2

Grade 3

Grade 4

Grade 5

Grade 6

Grade 7

Grade 8

Grade 9

Grade 10

Grade 11

Grade 12

Other:

Your feedback matters to us. Please share your thoughts on how we can ensure a successful Fall 2020 for students, staff, and families. \*

Your answer

# Appendix B

## Staff Reopening Feedback

Meriden Public Schools Reopening - Fall 2020

### Meriden Public Schools Reopening - Fall 2020

We value your opinion, please share your thoughts.

\* Required

Name \*

Your answer

School you work at: \*

- John Barry
- Benjamin Franklin
- Nathan Hale
- Hanover
- Thomas Hooker
- Casimir Pulaski
- Israel Putnam
- Roger Sherman
- Lincoln Middle School
- Washington Middle School
- Maloney High School
- Platt High School
- Success Academy
- Venture Academy
- CCC
- Other:

Grade level(s) you teach: \*

Kindergarten

Grade 1

Grade 2

Grade 3

Grade 4

Grade 5

Grade 6

Grade 7

Grade 8

Grade 9

Grade 10

Grade 11

Grade 12

Other:

Your feedback matters to us. Please share your thoughts on how we can ensure a successful Fall 2020 for students, staff, and families. \*

Your answer

## Appendix C

### Family School Reopening Survey

### School Reopening - Fall 2020

Hello MPS Families,

I hope you are doing well and enjoying the summer weather. The state has released guidance on the Fall 2020 Reopening. The Meriden Public Schools will be following health and safety measures, such as wearing masks, cohorting students where possible, and implementing additional cleaning measures.

If health data remains consistent, parents will have two options for their child/children: 1. in-person schooling or 2. placement at home in a distance learning environment. If your circumstances change, and you would like your child to transition from distance learning to in-person instruction, this will occur at the end of the marking period for consistency of student instruction.

Please complete the form below, once for each child.

Thank you for all your support!

Stay well,

Mark

Mark D. Benigni, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Meriden Public Schools

## Form Input

Complete by Thursday, Jul 16

Student Name \*

What type of schooling are you planning on for your child in the fall? \*

- In-person
- Distance Learning

If you qualify for transportation, will your child be using it? \*

Yes

No

Save

## Appendix D

### Staff School Reopening Survey

### Reopening Schools - Fall 2020

Hello MPS Team,

Hope you are doing well and enjoying summer!

As you know, the Connecticut State Department of Education has released reopening guidelines that has all students and staff returning to school for full-time instruction, as long as health data continues to support this model. The Meriden Public Schools will be following health and safety measures, such as wearing masks, cohorting students where possible, and implementing additional cleaning measures.

We are gathering preliminary information for planning purposes. Please answer the following question no later than Thursday, July 16, 2020.

While all staff will be expected to return to work, please let us know if you have concerns about your ability to return to work when school reopens for one of the following reasons:

- If school or daycare centers were closed, you would need to care for a child;
- If other services were unavailable, you would need to care for other dependents;
- If public transportation were sporadic or unavailable, you would be unable to travel to work; and or;

If you or a member of your household fall into one of the categories identified by the CDC as being at high risk for serious complications from the pandemic influenza virus, you would be advised by public health authorities not to come to work (e.g. pregnant women; persons with compromised immune systems due to cancer, HIV, history of organ transplant or other medical conditions; persons less than 65 years of age with underlying chronic conditions; or persons over 65).

Thank you for all of your support. I look forward to seeing you in the fall.

Best,

mark

Mark D. Benigni, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Meriden Public Schools

# Form Input

Complete by Thursday, Jul 16

For one of the reasons noted above, I have concerns about my ability to return to the school setting in the fall.

\*

Yes

No

Save

# Appendix E

## Distance Learning Survey

AC Your Opinion Counts! Please share your thoughts on Distance Learning.  
Amy Chernoff · · Wednesday, May 27 at 7:00 AM · Benjamin Franklin Elementary School

### Form Input

Complete by Friday, Jun 12

Note: No action required. Form deadline has passed.

### Your Opinion Counts! Please share your thoughts on distance learning.

As the Meriden Public Schools work to support students, parents and teachers, please share your feedback on your experience with distance learning by completing the short survey below.

What grade(s) is/are your child(ren) enrolled? Check all that apply. \*

- K
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12

Did your child use a school issued device(s) to access distance learning activities? \*

- Yes, Chromebook
- Yes, Chromebook and wifi hotspot
- No

**How meaningful do you feel the distance learning activities were to your child? \***

- Very meaningful
- Somewhat meaningful
- Not at all meaningful
- Don't know

**How much schoolwork was assigned to your child each week? \***

- Too much
- About right
- Too little
- Don't know

**How often did your child use Google Hangouts to participate in distance learning activities? \***

- Daily
- Weekly
- Seldom/Not at all
- Don't know

**Considering this COVID-19 emergency situation, what is your overall satisfaction of Meriden's distance learning? \***

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Not at all satisfied
- Don't know

**If we need to do distance learning again, what specific improvements would you suggest?**

Save

# Appendix F

## Meriden Public Schools Building Safety Measures

- Masks required, unless six (6) feet of social distancing can be maintained
- Cleaning is essential, four (4) hours of custodial cleaning have been added to each school and MPS facility

### Air Filtration

- Purchased air purifiers for all nurses' offices
- Changed all air filters
- Hired Fuss & O'Neill to perform system inspections with our staff
- Utilized Connecticut Temperature Controls to ensure that fresh air flow is maximized

### Classrooms

- All desks facing forward
- Remove extra furniture to allow for distancing
- Class size limits
- Hand sanitizer in all classrooms
- Classroom doors will be kept open to minimize touchpoints
- Student supplies will be individualized when possible
- All classrooms will have disinfectant available
- Plexiglass shields ordered for teacher desks

### Hallways

- Directional signage for foot traffic
- Water fountains will be turned off (students encouraged to bring personal water bottles)

### Cafeteria

- Capacity of cafeteria will be reduced by 50%
- Students will be able to socially distance
- Gymnasium space and outside options will be utilized

### Restrooms

- All sinks will have soap and paper towels
- Hand dryers will be disconnected